

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed December 15, 2005 has been carefully reviewed and, in view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

I. Claim Summary

Claims 75-110 are currently pending in the application, with claims 75, 85, 93, and 101 being independent claims. Claims 65-74 are cancelled and new claims 101-110 are added, in accordance with the above amendments.

As a first matter, the Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's allowance of claims 75-100. Regarding claims 65-74, the Office Action incorporates an election/restriction requirement and withdrew these claims from further consideration. As stated in the Office Action, original claims required first and second links to be substantially identical to each other, but independent claim 65 includes limitations to only the first link. New claims 101-110 are substantially identical to cancelled claims 65-74, but recite that the band has a first link and an adjacent second link that is substantially identical to the first link. Examination of claims 101-110 is, therefore, respectfully requested.

II. Discussion of Claims 101-110

Independent claim 101 recites a timepiece configured to be worn on a wrist of a wearer. The timepiece has a case that includes a timing element. In addition, the timepiece has a band extending from at least one side of the case. The band has a first link and an adjacent second link that is substantially identical to the first link. The first link is joined to the second link, and the first link includes a first extension element, a first cover member, a connecting springbar, and a joining springbar. The first extension element defines a connecting channel and a separate joining channel. The first extension element has a outward-facing surface and an opposite wrist-facing surface, with the wrist-facing surface being positioned to face the wrist. The first cover member is positioned adjacent the outward-facing surface of the first extension element. The first cover member extends over a portion of the first extension element that has the connecting channel, and the first cover member has a pair of side portions that extend toward the wrist-facing surface of the first extension element. The side portions define apertures aligned with the

connecting channel and positioned adjacent ends of the connecting channel. The connecting springbar extends through the first connecting channel and interfaces with the apertures to connect the first extension element to the first cover member. The joining springbar extends through the joining channel to join the first link to the second link.

A prior Office Action combined U.S. Patent Number 2,120,348 to Bezault and U.S. Patent Number 5,331,610 to Kikuchi in rejecting claims 65-74. Accordingly, the allowability of new claims 101-110, which are similar to claims 65-74, will be discussed in terms of the combination of Bezault and Kikuchi. Bezault discloses a bracelet formed from a plurality of joined elements. In contrast with the claimed matter, Bezault does not disclose a case and timing element. Accordingly, the rejection combines Bezault with Kikuchi, which discloses a watch having a case and timing element.

The plurality of joined elements in Bezault include, for example, main elements 23 and 24 and binding elements 23' and 24'. According to the Applicant's understanding of the rejection, main elements 23 and 24 are analogous to the claimed extension elements, and binding elements 23' and 24' are analogous to the claimed cover members.

According to independent claim 101, the first cover member extends over a portion of the first extension element that has the connecting channel. While the binding elements may extend over a portion of the main elements in Bezault, the binding elements do not extend over a portion of the main elements that form a connecting channel. Referring to Figure 5 of Bezault, main element 24 is depicted as defining various protrusions 35 through which a pin extends to join binding element 24' to main element 24. Note that binding element 24' extends between protrusions 35 and does not extend over a portion of main element 24 that forms protrusions 35. In contrast with independent claim 65, therefore, Bezault does not disclose a configuration wherein the first cover member (binding element 24') extends over a portion of the first extension element (main element 24) that has the connecting channel (protrusions 35). Rather, Bezault discloses a configuration wherein the first cover member (binding element 24') extends over a portion of the first extension element (main element 24) that is between portions forming the channel (protrusions 35).

According to independent claim 101 the first cover member has a pair of side portions that extend toward the wrist-facing surface of the first extension element. The binding elements of Bezault have a curved configuration that extends through apertures in the main elements. The

binding elements do not have, however, side portions that extend toward the wrist-facing surface of the main elements. Even if the Examiner should argue that the binding elements do have side portions (which the Applicant does not concede), the side portions do not define apertures aligned with the connecting channel and positioned adjacent ends of the connecting channel. More particularly, binding element 24', for example, does not define apertures aligned with protrusions 35 and positioned adjacent ends of a channel defined by protrusions 35.

Based upon the above discussion, the Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 101 is allowable over the prior art of record. In addition, claims 102-110 should be allowable for at least the same reasons. Furthermore, claims 103-106 should be allowable as the combination of Bezault and Kikuchi does not teach or suggest cover members extending over a crystal. Claim 107 should be allowable as the materials claimed are not taught or suggested by the combination of Bezault and Kikuchi.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are in a condition for allowance. The Applicants respectfully request, therefore, that the rejections be withdrawn and that this application now be allowed.

This Amendment is being timely filed by facsimile transmission on January 5, 2006. Should additional fees or an extension of time be deemed necessary for consideration of this Amendment, such fees or extension are hereby requested and the Commissioner is authorized to charge deposit account number 19-0733 for payment. If anything further is desirable to place the application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned representative at (503) 425-6800.

Respectfully submitted,

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